

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

SEGMENT #2: TEAMWORK



VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS



ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY



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The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

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FOR
NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS

A project administered by

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Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers



The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small group or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

FEELINGS OF ISOLATION

SEGMENT #2: TEAMWORK

VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

Feelings of Isolation: Feeling lonesome, anxious, and alone in classroom with limited resources and assistance. Having no clear-cut recipe or "how to do it" guide to manage an unexpected problem; or fear related to appearing incompetent to peers.

Facilitator: Dr. [Tammy Milby](#), Reading Faculty
Department of Teaching and Learning
School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University

AUDIO	VIDEO
<p>One of the best ways to feel less isolated in the classroom is to collaborate with other members of your team to plan instruction and analyze student performance.</p> <p>Welcome to this program! My name is Dr. Tammy Milby. I am on the faculty in the Department of Teaching & Learning at Virginia Commonwealth University. Today, I would like to share tips for how to best partner with your coworkers to improve student learning.</p> <p>Team collaboration is important for beginning teachers because it enhances lesson quality and helps reduce the overwhelming workload you may be facing. Let's take a look at some insights which will help you partner well with your colleagues:</p> <p>Organizing the Task Make sure that everyone is clear about the task at hand as you begin your meeting. Agree on the length of the meeting and the goals that you will accomplish.</p> <p>Rotate Roles Designate and rotate leadership roles within the group. Be certain that all members of your group contribute to the lessons that you are planning.</p> <p>Resources & Materials Determine what resources you will need to be successful and designate different members of the group to bring these materials to the meeting.</p> <p>Contributions Agree on contributions and follow-up. How will you be certain that your tasks are accomplished?</p> <p>Creativity Seek creativity. Student performance will improve when you stimulate new thinking. Assign someone to be the "what if" person who stretches your ideas and</p>	<p>DR. MILBY</p>

challenges the way you usually approach instructional topics.

Assessment

Use assessment information to guide your decisions. Examine patterns of student performance and build tailored lessons which address these needs.

Let's hear some experienced teachers describe collaborative methods that work well for their teams

My name is Jamie Baumgardner. I teach English in a middle school. This is my fourth year teaching but my first in this school district. Teaming is probably one of the best aspects of working in a middle school. Having a support system with a common goal leads to greater success. It is much better than 'going it alone'.

I am a member of two different teams at my school: The four person interdisciplinary team, and the 8th grade English content team. The four person team is wonderful because most members teach all of the same children. We share concerns about students' progress or behavior and get to see if there are any patterns. These teams make parent conferences easier as well. One definite perk of the four person team is the time out system. Because the teachers are located close to each other and have a relationship with the teams' students, it is helpful to be able to assign a student temporarily to another teacher when he or she needs a new environment for a few minutes in order to adapt his or her behavior. With these interdisciplinary teams, it is also easier to plan cooperative units of study that enhance student learning.

The English content team is a very efficient team. Each week we meet to be sure that we are on the same page and, of course, following the pacing guide. The team is focused on student learning and outcomes and extremely supportive. Each of these teams helps make the school year run a little smoother for all.

In addition to 'official' teams, the entire staff of a school could be considered a team. It is important that teachers work together to help their fellow teachers for the common good of the students. If teachers think with a team mentality, it is beneficial to all involved.

My name is William Berry. I am a second year social studies teacher at Tuckahoe Middle School. Last year, my school began using PLC's, or Professional Learning Communities, in order to give teachers of the same subject a specific time to collaborate together. Over the course of last year, I attended over thirty different PLC meetings. My PLC consists of 4 teachers (including myself) who teach the same subject. Our PLC constantly discusses how we are teaching specific topics and how we are assessing our students. It has been great to have a sounding board of teachers who will listen to my ideas about how to teach a lesson and then help expand on that lesson or offer ideas to make the lesson clearer or more meaningful for the students. Our PLC frequently shares different readings, different lines of questioning, and different projects that might be of use to other teachers. Utilizing the experiences of each teacher, we talk together constructively to improve our lessons and increase student learning.

**JAMIE
BAUMGARDNER**

WILLIAM BERRY

An election project that I had my students complete earlier this year stands out in my mind as a good example of how effective this collective lesson planning can be. As a group, the four members of our PLC sat down and developed exact questions that we wanted students to answer about the candidates. By working collaboratively, we made sure that we were covering all angles and not missing out on any large chunks of information. This type of planning is also effective when teachers have different strong points. I am not an artistic person by any means, but our group wanted to make the kids do something artistic with their projects. My role on the project was to develop the writing and questioning lines, while another teacher developed the outlines for the artistic portion of the exam. A third teacher developed the grading rubric, and the last teacher wrote out a list of research sites for the students. By working together, not only was the project more "complete," it took very little time to put it together.

As a new teacher, you want to create lessons that excite and engage students, but, creating these types of lessons can be terribly time consuming. When the paperwork on your desk piles up some days, it is hard to get yourself into a creative mode. Another effective use of collaboration is when you have multiple teachers working and creating together. The well for creative ideas does not dry up nearly as quickly. Teachers can share creative aspects of their lessons. In this way, students do not have to sit through a boring cut and dry lesson just because you did not have time to be creative. Even if you don't have a PLC time scheduled through your school, make sure to schedule time to meet with the teachers who teach the same content as you teach. Although the extra time to set aside may at first seem like a burden, it will be a life-saver in the long run. Ideas for lessons, questioning, and assessment all come easier and more complete when you work as a team.

Teamwork increases the quality of ideas and will help you keep your creativity going. Spending time establishing successful teams will ultimately lessen the workload for everyone. **Together Everyone Achieves More.**

DR. MILBY



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Feelings of Isolation: Feeling lonesome, anxious, and alone in a classroom with limited resources and accessible assistance. Having no clear-cut recipe or "how to do it" guide to manage an unexpected problem; and fear of appearing incompetent to peers.

Ask yourself: What forms of support do you have as a new teacher? How are you dealing with isolation and stress in your job?

Suggested use for this module:

1. Analyze:

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

2. View:

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

3. Compare:

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

4. Reflect:

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

5. Apply:

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

Scenarios 1 & 2: Feelings of Isolation

Scenario 1:

Beth stated, "I'm exhausted and being so tired is actually affecting my performance in the classroom. I've started to notice that by the end of the week I was getting to a point where I was not functioning very well since I am running low on fuel. Things are getting to me that wouldn't have bothered me so much on Monday."

I noticed that the behavior of the kids has also been an issue. By the end of the week, things that I would have dealt with one way on Monday are escalating. I get so exhausted that the kids wind me up and this creates more stress as time goes along."

Consider this quote from Beth. How are her feelings influencing students? What suggestions do you have for her to improve her experiences?

Scenario 2:

Todd confessed, "What really gets to me more than anything else is not being able to take a break all day long. I have so many duties during lunch and planning time that I can hardly gobble down my sandwich and coffee. I shuffle down the hallways at a ridiculous speed trying to accomplish everything. I am beginning to feel like I live inside of my classroom."

Consider this quote from Todd. How is he coping with his responsibilities? What suggestions do you have to help him improve his situation?

Circle the scenario that you selected below:

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Record a list of your own possible solutions here:

Summary & Goal Setting:

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Feelings of isolation and coping with stress are all normal parts of teaching. Teaching is a demanding profession which requires mental and physical strategies for tackling job stress. The first solution for most beginning teachers is to recognize your accomplishments and celebrate small successes. Conduct continuous self-evaluations and reevaluating what adjustments should be made in your teaching. Take on one thing to work on at a time. Remember, it gets much easier with time once you have established a repertoire of techniques for dealing with difficult situations. Your teaching mentor or another trusted teacher can help you cope and feel less isolated. Don't be afraid to talk to other teachers for support!

Here are 10 tips to help you rejuvenate and bring back your passion for teaching:

1. See the humorous side of the situation and take yourself less seriously
2. Do things for others
3. Talk to other people and seek opportunities for social support
4. Let go of being perfect- be honest with yourself and others
5. Develop healthy habits:
 - Rest and take breaks, stretch
 - Allow yourself to relax
 - Use deep breathing
 - Get more sleep
 - Eat more nutritious meals
 - Exercise
 - Avoid excess (including alcohol)
6. Delegate and learn to say 'no'
7. Stop solving everything for everyone
8. Find balance
 - Ask yourself: What hours do I teach? How much time does it take me to prepare and grade?
 - What time do I need for myself? What are my own personal commitments?
9. When things are not going well, reflect on the reason why. Don't be too hard on yourself. Learn from the experience and change it the next time. Seek professional growth opportunities such as

conferences, book chats, and websites to reconnect with other teacher who are experiencing similar problems

10. Celebrate and find joy in your career path. You are making such a difference for student's everyday! Believe in yourself!

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- ❖ Beginning teachers contribute to their own isolation when they hesitate to ask for help. Many consider seeking help an admission of failure and incompetence. In fact, beginning teachers studied by Newberry (1978) went to great lengths to cover up serious problems with student discipline.

Gordon, Stephen. & Maxey, Susan. (2000). *How to help beginning teachers succeed*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/23/95/64.pdf (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED34166)

- ❖ It is critical for new teachers to surround themselves with exemplary experienced colleagues. In most schools, teachers work in settings where the sociocultural context, if not the actual physical structure, encourages little interaction among adults and can contribute to feelings of isolation and frustration. This can limit a new teacher's maturation and stifle professional growth.

Hicks, Cathy, Glasglow, Neal & McNary, Sarah. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, p.10.

- ❖ Isolation is a widespread and chronic problem among teachers. It is related to stress overload, stagnation, and burnout. Isolation is not restricted to particular types of schools or levels of education.

Gaikwad, Samuel & Brantley, Paul. (1992). *Teacher isolation: loneliness in the classroom*. Adventist Education. p. 14.

- ❖ Strategies for alleviating teacher isolation include developing a climate of trust within the school, sharing decision-making power, and using professional development activities to improve communication and team-building skills among teachers. Additional strategies to consider include forming quality circles or other problem-solving committees, presenting meetings focused on the daily activities of staff members, requiring peer observation, increasing opportunities for staff social activities, encouraging attendance at professional meetings, conducting retreats for sharing values and attitudes, and planning regular informal meetings to discuss teaching techniques or new ideas gleaned from the professional literature.

Rothbert, Robert. (1985). *Improving school climate and reducing teacher isolation*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED270855)

- ❖ Isolation comes in several forms:
 - Egg-crate isolation refers to a physical separateness where teachers have little contact with other professionals
 - Psychological isolation is a state of mind rather than a condition of the workplace. It involves the teacher's perceptions of collegial interactions.

- Adaptive isolation occurs when teachers are unable to meet the demands of adapting to new teaching strategies. They feel overwhelmed in trying to acquire new strategies.

Gaikwad, Samuel & Brantley, Paul. (1992). *Teacher isolation: loneliness in the classroom*. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/jae199254041404.pdf>

- ❖ In response to a high rate of attrition, many state education associations have begun to focus on solving the problem of teacher isolation through formal mentoring programs.

Heider, Kelly. (2005). Teacher isolation: how mentoring programs can help. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number14/index.html>

- ❖ Studies have shown that mentoring programs such as telementoring, mentoring by a veteran teacher, novice teacher learning communities, and peer coaching help keep new teachers motivated and enthusiastic while increasing their skills and self-efficacy.

Heider, Kelly. (2005). Teacher isolation: how mentoring programs can help. Retrieved October 1, 2007, from <http://cie.asu.edu/volume8/number14/index.html>

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